

Cyrus C. Babb.

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THE HOUSE
OF THE
American Society
OF
Civil Engineers.



THE HOUSE
OF THE
American Society of Civil Engineers,
220 West Fifty-seventh Street,
NEW YORK CITY.

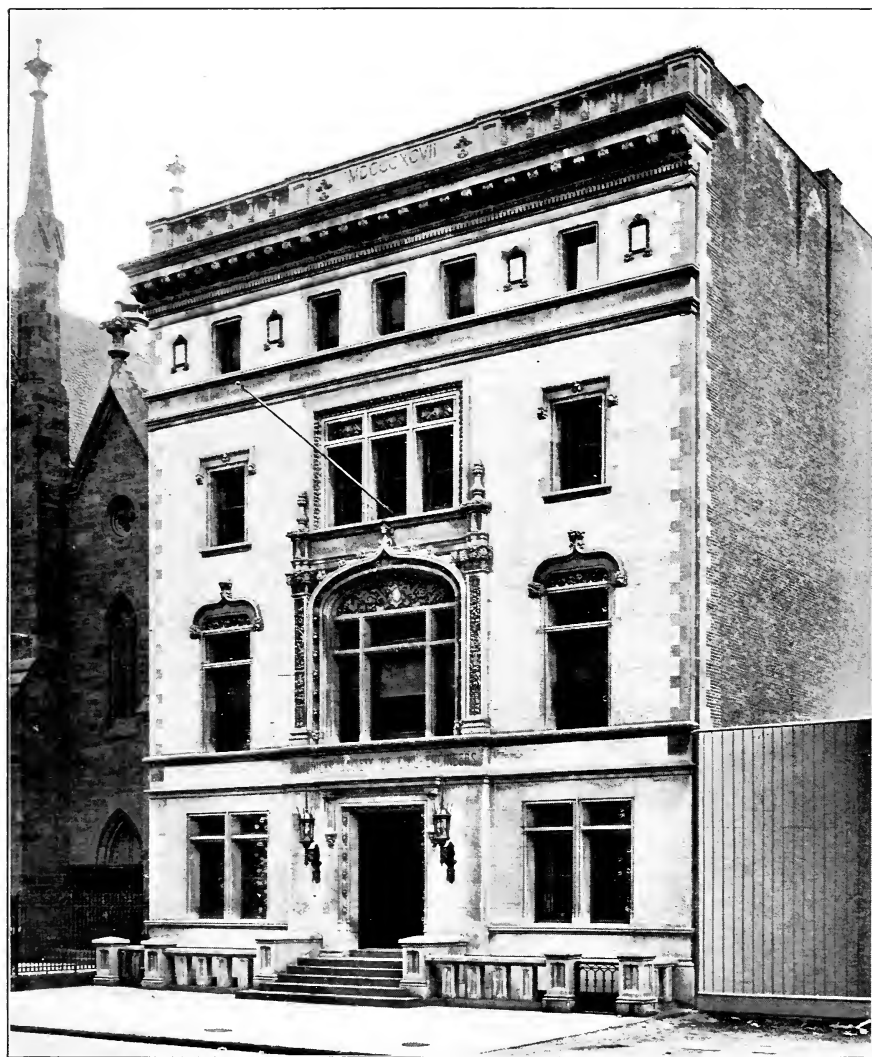


For the information of the membership, it has been decided by the Board of Direction to issue a brief description of the Society House, with illustrations prepared from photographs taken for the purpose.

At least seventy-five per cent. of the total membership is Non-Resident, and many have never had an opportunity to visit the headquarters of the Society, and, while photographs are necessarily inadequate, it is believed that those who have not seen the present House will be glad to have placed before them such illustrations as will give some idea of it, together with a statement as to its location and surroundings.

CHAS. WARREN HUNT,
Secretary.

NEW YORK CITY,
DECEMBER 7TH, 1903.



HOUSE OF THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

HISTORICAL.

The project for a building to be planned and erected solely for the use of a professional engineering society (the first project of this kind in America) was inaugurated in 1895. The matter was not undertaken with undue haste. Careful estimates of the resources of the Society were made, and the question was referred to the Business Meeting of the Annual Convention, which was held in June of that year near Boston.

This meeting approved the project unanimously, and the whole matter was placed in the hands of the Board of Direction, with power.

The present location, a lot on the south side of Fifty-seventh Street (one of the few New York streets which are 100 feet wide), midway between Seventh Avenue and Broadway, was selected, because of many advantages.

The general character of the location was well established, and entirely suitable for a building of this class. The Central Presbyterian Church occupies a large frontage immediately on the east, and on the opposite side of the street are the Fine Arts Building, and the "Osborn," and "Scarboro' Mansions," high-class apartment houses. The

only building which has been added to the block since 1896 is the private riding academy of Frank J. Gould, Esq., which is in no way objectionable, indeed, its fine façade adds much to the general architectural excellence of the neighborhood.

Three lines of surface cars run to the north and south within less than 200 yards of the building, and the cross-town surface line is only two short blocks away, on Fifty-ninth Street. Three stations of the Elevated Railroad (Fifty-eighth Street and Sixth Avenue, Fifty-ninth Street and Ninth Avenue, and Fifty-third Street and Eighth Avenue), are within short walking distance, and the Columbus Circle Station, of the new Underground Rapid Transit Road on Broadway, will be even more accessible.

The building occupies a lot having a frontage of 50 feet, with a depth of 107 feet on the east, and 114 feet on the west; the depth thus averaging 10 per cent. more than is usual in New York City lots.

The prediction, made in a circular issued in May, 1896, that the increase in value of the property would be "certain and rapid," has been amply fulfilled, a conservative estimate of the increase of value of the Society lot being from \$50 000 to \$60 000.

A Building Committee, which was appointed on January 15th, 1896, served continuously until the House was completed, and final payments made to the Architect and Builder, and upon its final report, dated October 4th, 1898, was discharged at its request.

This Committee was made up as follows :

GEORGE A. JUST, *Chairman* ;

CHAS. WARREN HUNT,

THOMAS C. CLARKE,

JOSEPH M. KNAP,

WM. R. HUTTON,

CHAS. SOOYSMITH,

BERNARD R. GREEN,

GEO. H. BROWNE.

The total cost, including lot and vault privilege, Architect's fees, insurance and taxes during construction, legal and other expenses, lighting plant, decorations and furniture, was \$206 284.63.

On the completion of final settlements, November 1st, 1898, there was a mortgage of \$85 000 at 5 per cent. On January 15th, 1903, this debt had been reduced to \$55 000, which now bears interest at 4 per cent.

The building was formally opened on November 24th, 1897, at 3.30 P. M. The dedicatory exercises, in the Auditorium, were presided over by B. M. Harrod, President of the Society, and were opened with a dedicatory prayer by the Right Reverend Henry C. Potter, Bishop of New York.

Addresses were delivered by President Harrod, General William P. Craighill, Past-President of the Society; J. G. Schurman, LL.D., President of Cornell University, and the Honorable Joseph H. Choate. The attendance was about five hundred and fifty.

In the evening there was a "House Warming," of a more social nature, about seven hundred ladies and gentlemen being present.



FIG. 2.—ENTRANCE HALLWAY.



FIGURE 3.—RECEPTION ROOM.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

As will be seen from the photograph of the exterior, there are four stories and a basement, and a brief explanation is here given, which, in connection with the photographs, will, it is hoped, make clear the purposes served by each part.

One passes through the vestibule, which is in the center, to the Main Hallway (Figure 2), 10 feet wide and 55 feet long, and on the left finds the Reception Room (Figure 3), and the Coat Room, where more than two



FIGURE 4.—SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

hundred hats and coats can be checked. At Annual Meetings it is necessary to use one of the basement rooms as an auxiliary.

On the right is the Secretary's Office, consisting of two rooms (Figures 4 and 5).

In Figure 2, the entrance to the Secretary's Office and to the Reception Room cannot be seen. The opening on the left is the Coat Room, and the doorway next to it leads to the Service Stairway (see Figure 15) which runs from the basement to the top floor. Beyond, the Main Stairway is seen.



FIGURE 5.—SECRETARY'S OFFICE.

The Board and Committee Room (heretofore known as the Lounging Room) may be seen in the background of Figure 2, its floor being several feet lower than that of the Main Hallway. This room is the full width of the building with a total depth of about 43 feet, and is shown in Figure 6. With this room is connected a serving-room (not shown) from which the simple collations at ordinary meetings are served by a caterer. These collations are paid for by subscription of resident members, there being no club features connected with the Society House.





FIGURE 6.— BOARD AND COMMITTEE ROOM.



FIGURE 7.—MAIN STAIRWAY.

As its name indicates, this room is also used for meetings of the Board of Direction and of Committees.

The Main Stairway (Figure 7) ends in the well-lighted central hall of the second floor, on which are the Reading Room (Figure 8) and the Auditorium (Figure 9).

The Reading Room occupies the whole second story front of the House, faces the north, and here are kept the latest files of all periodicals, publications of technical societies, in short, all current engineering literature. There are also shelves where new books are placed for a short period after their receipt. A section is also devoted

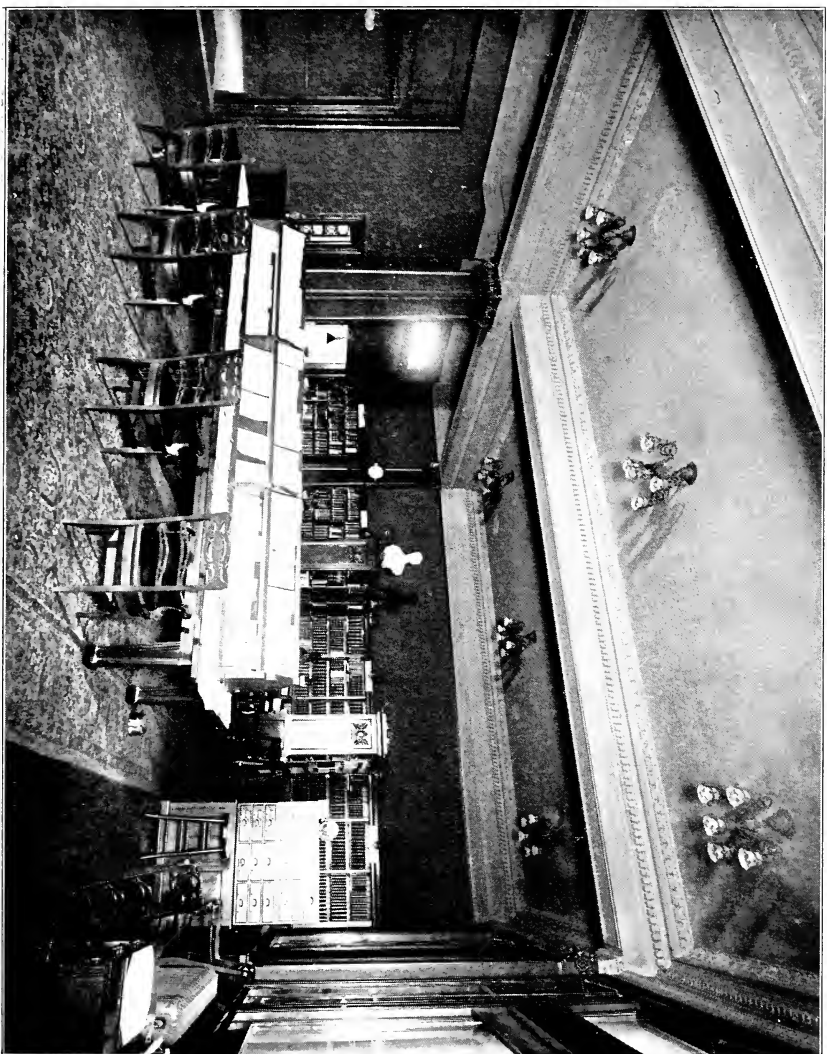


Figure 8.—Reading Room.

permanently to such volumes as are often consulted, engineering handbooks, technical dictionaries, encyclopedias and the like.

The Reading Room is open every day (except Sundays, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day) from 9 A. M. to 10 P. M., an assistant librarian being always on duty to assist those consulting the library, and here the general card index is placed. Books are brought from the Stack Room, on the fourth floor, to the reader, unless he prefers to go there himself, which is sometimes the case, and is due to the fact that the method of classification adopted brings together on the shelves, as far as possible, books on specific subjects.

The Auditorium, like the Board and Reading Rooms, occupies the entire width of the House, and its depth, without the speaker's stand or alcove, is 48 feet. Its seating capacity is about four hundred. The chairs are movable, and those who have attended an Annual Meeting probably appreciate the fact that it is well adapted to purely social functions. Eighteen ordinary meetings are held during the year.

An opening in the wall of this room, just above the floor of the third story, allows the use of a permanent electric lantern for the illustration of papers presented, the wall space at the rear of the rostrum being used in place of the usual screen.

It will be seen that those visiting the house have seldom occasion or desire to go beyond the second floor, inasmuch as the Secretary's Office, Board and Committee Room, Reading Room and Auditorium are all on the first



FIGURE 9.—AUDITORIUM.



FIGURE 10.—PART OF THIRD FLOOR.

two floors and easy of access. The third floor is devoted entirely to the executive and editorial work, while the fourth floor is occupied exclusively by the Stack Room. For this reason no elevator was provided, and thus an unnecessary expense is avoided.

The Service Stairway (Figure 15) leads to the third floor, and here the bookkeeping, mailing, editorial and general force is installed. Only part of this floor can be shown in a photograph, but its general use will be found well indicated in Figure 10. The floor space is about 2 000 square feet.

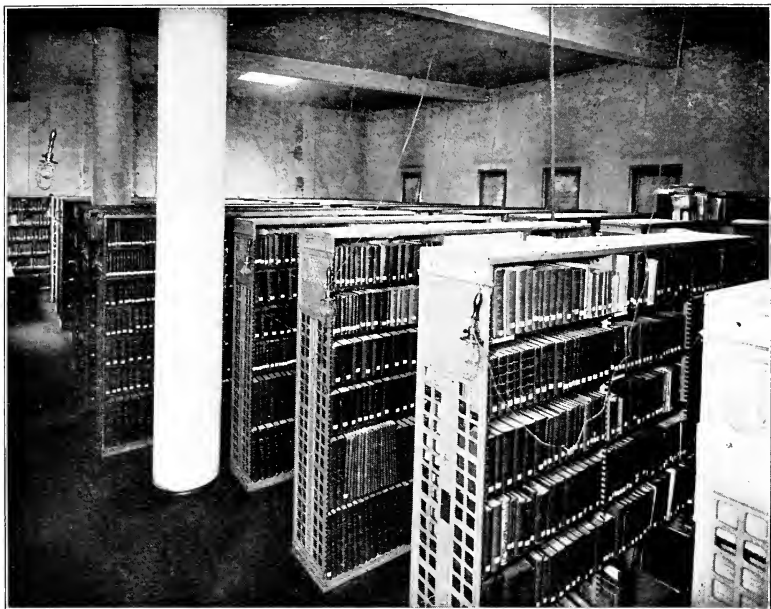


FIGURE 11.— PART OF STACK ROOM.

The Stack Room, reached only by the Service Stairway, is shown in part only in Figure 11. The floor space is about 2 000 square feet, and one tier of metal book stacks, with adjustable metal shelves, is now in use. Head-room has been provided for a duplication of the present stacks when needed. The capacity of these stacks is indicated by the fact that the total number of volumes (including specifications, maps, etc.) now indexed in the Library is about 48 000, and the capacity of the first tier of stacks is not nearly reached.





FIGURE 12.—STORAGE ROOM.

The work of the Society makes it necessary to provide a large amount of storage room, and this is secured in the basement. Figures 12 and 13 show the two Storage Rooms where the method of storing the 121 000 copies of the various publications of the Society now on hand is indicated. These extra copies, which are kept for the convenience of Members and others, have cost the Society, for printing only, to date, more than \$14 000. One of these rooms (Figure 13), which is at the front of the





FIGURE 13.—MAILING ROOM.

house, is also used as a Mailing Room for the publications. This avoids the conveying of the entire edition of the monthly *Proceedings* and of the Volumes of *Transactions* to the third floor and back again.

In the Basement the Janitor has comfortable quarters.

The sidewalk on Fifty-seventh Street being 30 feet wide, the vault privilege was purchased from the City, and the Boiler Room, Coal Bins and Engine Room are there located, entirely separate from the building.

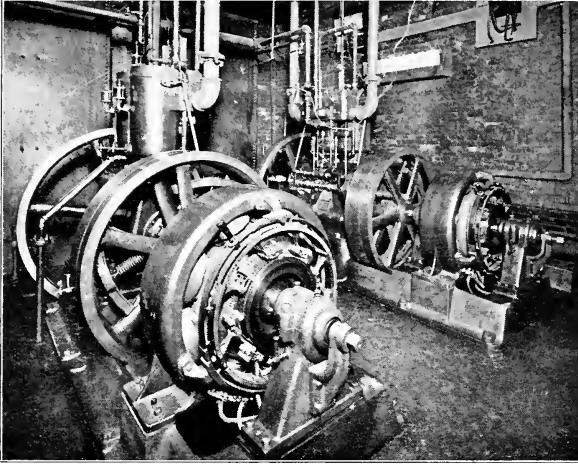


FIGURE 14.—ENGINE ROOM.

The Engine Room (Figure 14) contains two gas engines, of 25 Horse-Power each, with direct-connected dynamos, which furnish current for the lighting of the building.

Heat is supplied from a low-pressure boiler. The entire house, with the exception of the Board Room and Auditorium, is heated by direct radiation, while in the two rooms mentioned the indirect method is used.



FIGURE 15.—SERVICE STAIRWAY.







LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



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